

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY MANAGUA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1427

INFO AMEMBASSY CARACAS

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AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR

AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

/AMEMBASSY PANAMA 1356

C O N F I D E N T I A L MANAGUA 4937

FOR SECRETARY KISSINGER

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, VE, NU

SUBJECT: VENEZUELA'S FOREIGN MINISTER ON U.S. POLICY AND HISPANIC
COOPERATION

1. VENEZUELAN FOREIGN MINISTER, RAMON ESCOVAR SALMON, VISITED NICARAGUA ON OCTOBER 19, 1976 AND MET WITH PRESIDENT SOMOZA, FOREIGN MINISTER MONTIEL, OTHER CABINET OFFICERS, THE PRIVATE SECTOR, AND THE LOCAL PRESS. DURING A RECEPTION IN HIS HONOR, THE FOREIGN MINISTER CONVERSED WITH THE AMBASSADOR FOR NEARLY AN HOUR ABOUT U.S. POLICY, AND HISPANIC COOPERATION.

2. FOREIGN MINISTER ESCOVAR TOLD THE AMBASSADOR THAT HE HAD THE VERY HIGHEST REGARD FOR SECRETARY KISSINGER, AND FOR THE IMAGINATIVE AND RESPONSIVE POLICY ADOPTED BY THE UNITED STATES TOWARDS LATIN AMERICA IN THE PAST YEAR OR SO. ESCOVAR HAD STRONG WORDS OF PRAISE FOR THE SECRETARY, WHO, HE SAID, "HAD OVERCOME HIS LACK OF KNOWLEDGE ABOUT LATIN AMERICA AND HAS BRILLIANTLY GRASPED THE ESSENTIALS." IT WAS, HE SAID, A TRIBUTE TO THE SECRETARY'S INITIATIVES SUCH AS TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER AND FOOD AID, THAT THE UNITED STATES AND LATIN AMERICA WERE NOW MOVING ON PARALLEL TRACKS.

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3. THE FOREIGN MINISTER DESCRIBED HIS TRIP TO CENTRAL AMERICA AS ONE THAT AIMED AT ESTABLISHING CONTACTS AND A REALISTIC BASIS FOR STRONGER TIES OF FRIENDSHIP AND COOPERATION. THIS WAS, HE SAID, HIS FIRST VISIT TO NICARAGUA. HE FELT THAT VENEZUELA HAD STRATEGIC INTERESTS IN THE CARIBBEAN AREA WHICH HAD BEEN NEGLECTED IN THE PAST. HIS GOVERNMENT WISHED TO DO ALL IT COULD TO STRENGTHEN REGIONAL UNITY AND COOPERATION. BUT, HE ADDED, THERE SHOULD BE NO FEAR THAT A LATIN BLOC WOULD BE HOSTILE TO THE UNITED STATES. THAT WAS NOT THE INTENTION. HE BELIEVED THAT THE HISPANIC WORLD-SPAIN, PORTUGAL AND LATIN AMERICA-IS CAPABLE OF PLAYING AN INFLUENTIAL ROLE IN THE WORLD IF UNITY OF PURPOSE CAN BE ATTAINED. A UNITED HISPANIC COMMUNITY WOULD BE ABLE TO FORGE ITS TRUE IDENTITY, FOSTER DEVELOPMENT AND STRENGTHEN DEMOCRATIC VALUES. ESCOBAR ASSERTED THAT THE DESTINY OF THE HISPANIC WORLD WAS LINKED INSEPARABLY TO THAT OF THE WEST BUT THAT THIS GROUP OF NATIONS HAD THEIR OWN INTERESTS TO DEFEND IN WORLD COUNCILS. COMMENT: FOREIGN MINISTER ESCOBAR EXPRESSED WARM ADMIRATION FOR SECRETARY KISSINGER AND THE UNITED STATES. HE DOWNPLAYED VENEZUELA'S ROLE IN PUSHING FOR OPEC PRICE INCREASES AND STRESSED HIS GOVERNMENT'S FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE TO THE CENTRAL AMERICAN COUNTRIES, ALTHOUGH NO FURTHER AID WAS MENTIONED PUBLICLY DURING THE VISIT. HIS "HISPANIC COMMUNITY" THEME IS LIKELY TO PROVE NO MORE SUBSTANTIAL THAN THE NOTION OF CREATING MORE OPEC-LIKE PRIMARY COMMODITY CARTELS WHICH ANIMATED THE GOV IN ITS FIRST FLUSH OF OPEC SUCCESS.

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